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The Endless Quest

by JACOB BOLT*

" . . . That I may know Him."

Religion . . . salvation . . . is re than God telling us that our sins le blotted out, and that, after a brief urn under the cold stars, we find open gate into heaven where shad- s will frighten us no longer and we ll never again stumble.

True religion is fellowship with God. Blessed are they who have come to point where they care for nothing God.

God is man's great need. And the nful cry of the soul, consciously or consciously uttered, is: O that I knew ere I might find Him!

Came Jesus Christ into the world king the astounding declaration: "I the way . . . No man comes to the her but by Me" and "He that hath n Me hath seen the Father," John 6, 9.

* * *

In the days of His flesh Jesus de a great offer to the people who ssed His path. And what He of- ed to men in that far-away time, He ers to us who are living at the end the ages. He offered . . . He offers Himself.

Christ never gives anything apart m Himself. He called men to Him- f: "Come unto Me, and I will give u rest." Christ Jesus preached Him- f: "I am the good Shepherd . . . I the door . . . I am the light of the rld . . . I am the bread of life . . . I am the way, the truth, the life . . . No man comes to the Father but by Me."

* * *

Paul was arrested by Jesus at the gate of Damascus, Acts 9:5. Since that never-forgotten day Paul was fired by one ambition: *that I may know Him.*

When Paul writes this to His beloved friends and fellow believers in Philippi, thirty years have gone by. If then he has already known Jesus for so many years, what can he mean when he writes, "I do count all things but dung, that I may know Him"?

The explanation lies ready to hand. The longer he walked with Jesus Christ the more he realized that in Him he had *met a person he could never fully know.*

Paul saw His face, he heard His voice, and the face and the voice were those of a man. Yet there came to him with tremendous force the realization that the person who revealed Himself was divine. "The Son of God loved me, and gave Himself for me."

Seeking to know Christ is an endless quest.

For the exploration of the unsearchable riches of Christ, eternity will not be too long.

Seeking to know Christ always ends in finding. Yet the finding is never complete. No man has yet discovered where we stop finding and knowing Christ.

In the awful and mysterious depths of the Triune God, where Christ leads us, there is no limit, no end.

The infinite One is He.

Found when sought, yet always beyond us, beckoning us to come closer, to become more intimate. We see Him but with blurred vision. Every disclosure which He makes of Himself is a promise of further revelation of His infinite worth and preciousness.

The heart of us, in which God has put eternity, rests in the eternal God, yet restlessly seeks Him. Ever seeking and always finding. This is an exploration that reveals an infinite reach.

The heart satisfied . . . yet never satiated. Always drinking at the fountain

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Rev. Jacob Bolt has been minister and sionary in the Christian Reformed Church ce 1899.

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The Endless Quest — Continued

. . . and still thirsting for more. Every draught creating greater thirst. "My soul thirsteth for God, the living God."

* * *

. . . *That I may know Him.* It is not merely kowledge about Him, but Himself that we crave to know. It is His companionship that we yearn for, His presence, unseen and yet as real as the sun in the sky.

* * *

MYSTICISM?

So be it. So it is. Christianity is a mystic religion, John 14:20, 23. If we do not know that mystic reality, we do not experience the sweetness, the joy, the peace, the outlook that Christ gives to the true seekers.

Mysticism?

All life is mystic in its depth. We know one another, not by the clothes we wear, nor by the words that fall hot or cold from our lips. We know each other in a different way. There is a contact of spirits that defies explanation.

So our knowledge of Christ is other than knowledge of words. True, sound teaching, a correct conception of truth, is necessary to followship with God in Christ. But correct opinion is not fellowship. I fear lest a smug interpretation of Scripture take the place of experiential heart knowledge. The Bible is not an end in itself, but a means to the end of bringing one into fellowship with Christ.

Saving faith is more than accepting as true what the Bible tells us about Christ. It is that, too, but it is infinitely more. It is trusting Him and embracing Him in love for which no language of man has yet found words.

* * *

PAUL preached Christ. Some forty times he mentions Him in the short letter to the Philippians. Him we must know as only the heart can know.

Knowing Him we shall experience the peace of God that passes all understandng. Knowing Him will make the heart speak, and listening angels will fold wings in rapt attention.

Knowing Him brings with it a consuming passion to know Him better. Knowing Him, we shall be uplifted by the imperishable hope of seeing Him. Then we shall know even as we are known.

* * *

HIM we must know . . . the man who died for us . . . Jesus Christ, crucified, risen, coming again:

Never farther than the cross
Never higher than His feet.

* * *

O, Jesus, ever with us stay,
Make all our moments calm and bright;
Chase the dark night of sin away,
Shed o'er the world Thy holy light.

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Back to God Hour Follow-Up Program

by HAROLD DEKKER

IN this discussion I define the "Back to God Hour follow-up program" as the three-point program adopted by the Synod of 1950, *i.e.*, the use of the mail, particularly for sending printed material; follow-up by personal calls, including those in cities where we have no churches, and the correlation of this with Home Missions; and radio rallies in various communities. By "Home Missions" I mean in this discussion, both church extension and evangelism.

To have a proper perspective on our subject we should note that radio follow-up really requires integration with other phases of the total Kingdom enterprise, as well as with Home Missions specifically. Broadly conceived it is an effort to exploit radio contacts for the total advance of the Kingdom. It may and should be an instrument, in appropriate ways, for the cause of Christian mercy, for Christian action socially, economically and politicall and especially for education. Su possibilities are as yet little more th envisioned, but certainly the visi should not be lacking. We look f the time when the Back to God Ho follow-up program will be effectiv harnessed to the needs and servi of such institutions as our Christi mental hospitals, Elim School, Betha Home, the Young Calvinist and Me Federations, Christian citizens grou the Christian Labor Association, National Union of Christian Scho and perhaps most important of

**Rev. Harold Dekker, now Dean of Students at Calvin College, was recently in charge of Follow-Up Work for the Back To God Hour Radio Program. This paper was originally presented as a talk to the Christian Reformed Conference on Home Missions held in Grand Rapids in March of this year.*

lvin College and Seminary. But r concern at the moment is with the tegration of the follow-up program th Home Missions. There are, of urse, three types — consistorial ingly or jointly), classical, and sy-dical. The latter is the main in-est here.

IT may be helpful at this point set forth the objectives or the aims the Back to God Hour follow-up ogram, as they appear in any effort integrate it with church extension d evangelism. I find five discernible ns:

(1) *To expand and consolidate the radio audience.* Every week the Back to God Hour receives mail from hundreds of people who have apparently tuned in for the first time. There are still millions of people who are only a flick of the dial away from our message, people who have never heard it. There are also those millions who have tuned in once or twice, but due to some incidental circumstance have lost contact, people whose acquaintance should be renewed. The entire denomination, fully mobilized synodically, classically, and congregationally, to bear its witness to America, could make this nation Back to God Hour conscious to a marked degree. The happy result would be a reflex action by which the various agencies of the church would find their own range of witness expanding. The better correlation there is between radio and our other instruments of witness, the larger and more constant will become the total mass of people whom we reach by all these available means. This is an overall strategy of witness in which radio finds its proper place, sometimes as a cause and sometimes as a result in relation to other media.

(2) *To bring listeners into the Christian Reformed fellowship.* The absence of the communion of the saints is one of the inherent limitations of radio and of the mail as well. Therefore Back to God Hour rallies and personal visits to listeners become necessary. There are many of our listeners who have never had personal fellowship with Reformed Christians, and some who have never been associated with any mature expression of the body of Christ. We must seek to instruct them with our words, sanctify them with our example, strengthen them with our comradeship, and enrich them with our spirit. Practically, this means, of course, such things as the making of personal calls at the homes of radio listeners, the extending of persuasive invitations to services, society meetings, programs, etc., and also, something in which we are particularly deficient, lending the hospitality of our homes to those who have opened their homes to our radio visits — all of this without immediate regard for winning such people as members for our church.

(3) *To spread the knowledge of the Reformed faith.* The riches of God's truth are really shared in only paltry portions by means of radio, and this in the face of the abysmal ignorance and appalling confusion regarding Christianity which pervade the American masses today. Limitations of time and of censorship in broadcasting, as well as the polyglot character of the radio audience, make it imperative that other means of communication be found for the fullness and the precision of Christian doctrine. When listeners respond with interest, and in many cases with enthusiasm to what they hear on the air, when they hunger for more spiritual food and seek for more light, we certainly must do all we can to meet the need. Some of this can be done by means of personal letters, some by means of rallies and other meetings, and some by visiting listeners in their homes, but obviously the most efficient means is that of mailing printed materials.

(4) *To provide a broad pastoral service.* This is closely related to the foregoing. When personal spiritual needs are revealed in the mail, they can be and are given individual attention at our radio office, either by special letter or by carefully selected literature. Untold blessing is afforded by these means, but their limitations are obvious. Naturally, personal contact in the home is much more effective. Such personal calls will uncover the depth and extent of the need, and they may expose needs which were not even indicated in the mail. The needs we speak of are obvious. There are the sick, the shut-ins, and the aged. There are also the bereaved, the poor, the tempted and tried, and the victims of broken homes. If the local church ministering in its pulpit on Sunday must be the shepherd of its hearers during the week, the church preaching on the radio must do its utmost to deal intimately and personally with the needs which that preaching exposes and itself occasions. The vastness of the task is no excuse for its complete neglect. To leave the task to other churches is not a worthy alternative, for so few are faithful in pastoral work, and so few are consistent with the truth in its performance.

(5) *To win listeners as members of the Christian Reformed Church.* Insofar as the foregoing aims are reached, we may expect that in due time God will lead some of these people into the membership of our own church and into the membership of churches which are in general compatible with our message. This is logical enough. The primary purpose of our radio ministry will always be to gather and serve the universal, invisible church. But the goal of membership in a truly Calvinistic Church is both legitimate and necessary if we are to be consistent with our convictions regarding the superiority of things Reformed. Moreover, there are listeners who come, through both the radio messages and the follow-up program, to regard membership in the church of the Back to God Hour with a holy jealousy. Our final aim must be to make available to them our own church or one like it.

* * *

IN line with the foregoing objectives I now make a number of practical remarks regarding the operation of the follow-up program and its integration with Home Missions.

1. *This integration is to be expected at many different points and in a variety of ways.* Such integration may be going on in unrealized places where the broadcast and the telecast are preparing for the opening of new Home Mission fields by dinning our name and our message, week after week, into thousands of homes. So too, rallies and literature are at work in this preparatory process. Moreover, it is quite evident radio responses on file will be taken into account in the

Back to God Hour Follow-up Program — Continued

selection and investigation of potential new fields, and that in conducting neighborhood surveys we will be alert to discover listeners. In the actual beginning of organized work spot announcements on the air and mailed notices to our Back to God Hour mailing list will give valuable publicity. Listeners will be invited to Bible classes and other informal meetings as well as to services. At various stages radio rallies will fit in. And throughout his work the home missionary in charge will want to receive the fan mail from the area in order to make personal calls in as many cases as possible, always primarily to render a broad pastoral service and only secondarily to gain new members. Moreover people contacted in other ways will be told about the broadcast and urged to listen. Thus in varying patterns our denominational radio witness will be correlated with the broader program of denominational evangelism.

2. *The selection of new fields should favor larger cities where the broadcast is regularly heard.* This is certainly not the only decisive factor in the selection of new fields. But it is a very important one. If we take seriously our follow-up program we will as quickly as possible put our church within reach of the 70-80% of our listeners who are now beyond its direct personal contact. We have been, and still are very largely, a side street church with a message that deserves main street attention. The radio puts our message on main street where it belongs. It remains for the church to follow it up, with priority to those 83 of the 100 largest cities in the nation where we do not yet have organized congregations.

3. *We must try with wisdom, humility, and boldness to effectively span the entire social order.* Our radio response insistently requires this, for it embraces all parts of our society, racially, economically, politically, and educationally. We are middle class, and nearly all of our Home Missions, denominationally at least, is middle class. We usually go suburban with our new churches. We avoid the heart of the city, and we hesitate before its upper class avenues. When we do follow-up our radio listeners, we usually stop short of both the slums and the gold coast. We let severely alone both the no-accounts and the men of affairs. And we are not even inclusive of nationalities, let alone races. This is natural. There are reasons for it. But radio is no respecter of persons, any more than the God who gave us our message. Our follow-up program too must be no respecter of persons. That makes home missions hard. But Christ never said it would be easy.

4. *We should not be unduly hesitant to work with members of other churches.* It is fashionable nowadays to claim some kind of church membership. But, as we all realize, much of this church membership is lapsed, inactive, or purely nominal, and many who claim it are not genuine Christians at all. Moreover, many of the churches in which people hold membership are actually false churches. One of the most telling lessons of reading radio mail is that there are millions of people in this country who are spiritually starving right within their churches. And as far as orthodox, evangelical churches are concerned, even people who are faithful members in them are often spiritually undernourished because of a deficiency in the balanced diet of the whole counsel of God. It is true that most of our Back to God Hour listeners claim church membership. But for many that membership means little or nothing. For many others it is a membership from which they should be emancipated. And for still others there remains a need for what we can give out of the riches of the Reformed faith. In other words, follow-up with members of other churches is not only warranted but necessary. In some cases we will actually want to draw them out of their churches into ours, while in other cases we will want to serve them in the distinctive ways for which God has qualified us.

5. *Synodical Home Missions should, in the interest of radio follow-up as well as the rest of its program, assure the availability of tracts and pamphlets adequate for the task.* There is a long-felt lack in this respect. For instance, we have no suitable booklet which introduces the Christian Reformed Church as a whole to its American neighbors — its life, its history, its institutions, etc., placing all of these carefully in the contemporary scene. Moreover, doctrines such as the five points of Calvinism respectively have no clear, concise, readable expression in pamphlet form. The same is true for such assorted doctrines as infant baptism, amillenialism, and presbyterian polity. Our stand on such matters as the lodge and divorce begs for easily distributable statements. Our testimony on a variety of social, economic, and political issues is not to be had for an easy, inexpensive mailing. Materials for home study in Bible and doctrine are sparse. We are sadly unready to speak to America in leaflet and pamphlet for wide distribution, on the tenets which we hold most basic and distinctive.

6. *We should not expect a large immediate response from radio listeners to our Home Mission program.* Just like any kind of evangelism, radio follow-up requires constancy, patience, and perseverance. Not very many Back to God Hour listeners will fall like ripe plums into our denominational lap at the outset. Considerable cultivation will usually be necessary. Therefore it is not reasonable to test a prospective field by the number of radio listeners who are ready to commit themselves at once to our fellowship. That there are such, even in outlying cities, is actually amazing. If not doctrinally, then certainly ecclesiastically, sociologically, and psychologically a rather large adjustment is necessary before people will be ready to take up their membership with us. If we are to seriously pursue the follow-up program in new fields it is imperative that we work with diligence and with constancy from the very start. A missionary must be assigned quickly, and he must stay for an extended period. Our initial efforts to do radio follow-up in new fields have suffered from stopgap leadership and patch-work methods — tactics which may do in ordinary church extension but are not adequate for frontier evangelism. A prospective field can be put to convincing test only through the protracted and regular service of a sing-

home missionary, a man with maximum talent and experience who undertakes his work as soon as possible after the beginning of activity.

* * *

THE follow-up program is, of course, much broader than synodical Home Missions. It involves also the classes and the congregations. In a way it is hardly fair to expect leadership in this new program to be taken by denominational Home Missions. As a matter of fact, the local congregations are theoretically in a much better position for it than are our denominational home missionaries struggling alone out on some frontier. The established congregation, with all its resources of leadership and equipment, with its breadth and depth of the communion of the saints, with its poise and its balance, its standing in the community, its strength and versatility — there in the well established congregation in Grand Rapids, in Chicago, in Paterson — there is where we might expect to find initiative in follow-up, the showing of the way, the perfecting of methods, and the setting out of strong example. But just there is where all of this is especially lacking.

Why is radio follow-up not virile and effective in our established congregations? I suppose it is because just there, where we have our greatest potential strength for evangelism, we also have our weaknesses most acutely — a certain narrowness of vision, the lassitude of middle-class complacency, dullness of sensitivity to the needs of others, a typical inhospitality of spirit toward "outsiders," the paralysis of mooted provincialism, and perhaps some lukewarmness of conviction.

And so it is greatly up to you, our home missionaries on denominational fields, to you and your fine little bands of believers, to whom God has given large vision, generosity of spirit, and greater passion for sharing the historic faith. Yes, it is probably up to you to pioneer in a most difficult task in most difficult places. The field of radio evangelism is indeed white unto harvest. We thank God for giving you as reapers. May He also give you wisdom and strength and perseverance for the work, and may you by His grace be able to bring in at least something of the harvest. And then perhaps we with our far greater resources at home will be moved to follow your lead in obedience to the Lord of the Harvest.

Two Types of Preaching

by ANTHONY A. HOEKEMA*

THE recent celebrations of the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Herman Bavinck have again brought into focus the tremendous contributions to our theological knowledge which this giant among men has made. Bavinck was, however, not only a great theologian; he was also gifted with much practical common sense. He was always a man of balance, avoiding extremism, ready to see both sides of a question, and to incorporate into his final solution of a problem the best that had been said on both sides.

Both of these qualities, his practicality and his balance, are well illustrated by an illuminating discussion of his on two kinds of preaching. This discussion occupies pages 158 to 185 of his *Roeping en Wedergeboorte* (Calling and Regeneration), a book published in 1903. Bavinck calls these two kinds of preaching *zendingsprediking* (mission preaching) and *gemeentepredikking* (congregational preaching). What follows is a digest of his very helpful comments on this most practical subject.

* * *

WHEN we ask ourselves how the Scriptures consider and address adults, so says Bavinck at the beginning of his discussion, we must immediately make a sharp distinction between those who are outside and those who live within the boundaries of the covenant of grace. Already in the Old Testament there is in principle a pronounced difference between the preaching which is addressed to the heathen and that which is addressed to the people of Israel.

The mission preaching of the Old Testament differs from that which is addressed to covenant people in various ways. The heathen are not the people of the Lord; they walk in their own ways; their gods are idols who do not exist and are therefore nothing but lies and vanity. The condition of the Gentile world is described in Scripture as one of darkness, ignorance, imagined but unreal wisdom, and great unrighteousness. The preaching which is addressed to the heathen is therefore a calling out of darkness to light, an invitation to turn from idols to the service of the true and living God.

In contrast to this, the congregational preaching of the Old Testament bears an entirely different character. The preaching of the prophets always proceeds from the basic assumption that Israel is the people of God, and therefore must walk in the way of the covenant. The serving of other gods by Israel is therefore a breaking of the covenant, a species of spiritual adultery. Israel, having been received by the Lord in grace, is obligated by God's great love for her to a reciprocal love for God. Having been delivered from bondage in Egypt, she must now walk before God's face in sincerity and faithfulness.

Paired with this emphasis on Israel's covenantal privileges, there is in the prophets and the psalms also a proclamation of chastisement for sin and a most earnest exhortation to repentance and conversion. Precisely because the prophets view the people of Israel, no matter how deeply they might fall into sin, as always remaining the chosen people of God, the preaching of the former is so strict and so earnest. The sin of Israel is not a sin of ignorance, as can be said in a certain sense of the sin of the heathen nations, but is a deed of intentional disobedience. The preaching of the Word addressed to Israel in the days of the Old Testament therefore rested on the basis of the covenant, but nevertheless, or rather, for that very reason, made a sharp dis-

*Dr. Hoekema, who recently completed a thesis at Princeton on Herman Bavinck's Doctrine of the Covenant, is minister of the Alger Park Christian Reformed Church, Grand Rapids.

Two Types of Preaching — Continued

tinction between the true and false members of that covenant.

* * *

Essentially we find the same distinction between mission preaching and congregational preaching in the New Testament as in the Old. Both John the Baptist and Jesus proceed from the thought that the people of Israel are the people of God's covenant whom He has graciously chosen and adopted as His heritage. Nevertheless both preach the necessity of faith and repentance. When Israel through its murder of the Messiah casts itself out of the kingdom, the New Testament church takes its place and now becomes the true people of God. This church is, however, at first gathered in large part from the Gentiles. Hence, in the remainder of the New Testament, mission preaching is in the foreground. This mission preaching addresses itself to those who were separate from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of the promise, having no hope and without God in the world — but who have been called out of darkness into God's marvelous light.

Alongside of this mission preaching, however, there occurs in the New Testament also congregational preaching. Jesus not only preached the gospel of the Kingdom to those who did not yet belong to His followers, but He also instructed His disciples and helped them to understand the mysteries of kingdom of heaven. When he told His apostles to make disciples of all nations, he added that they should also teach those who thus became His disciples to observe all things whatsoever He had commanded them.

The difference, therefore, between congregational preaching and mission preaching is that the former builds on the foundation laid by the latter. Accordingly we see the apostles adopt quite a different approach when they speak or write to members of a congregation which have accepted the gospel and are through their doctrine and life confessing it. The congregations of Christ, to judge by the epistles directed to them, consist of those who are beloved of God, elect of God, called to be saints, believers, brethren in Christ Jesus; and as such believers the members of these congregations are not only addressed, but continually regarded and dealt with. The apostles all assume that the members of the congregations addressed, who formerly walked in the darkness of superstition and unbelief, now have been called out of that darkness into God's light. Hence there is in the epistles a broader unfolding of the truth, a warning against false doctrine, an admonition to walk worthily of the calling wherewith they have been called, and a summons to be zealous of good works.

And yet the New Testament also teaches that into these Christian congregations, from the very beginning, all kinds of error, heresy, and unrighteousness entered. There was a Judas among the apostles; there were Ananias and Sapphira in the church at Jerusalem. There was chaff among the wheat; there were non-fruitbearing branches on the vine; there were bad fish in the net. All such persons, though they did not constitute the essence of the church, were nevertheless present in the church. And hence, in the New Testament preaching which addressed itself to the congregation, there remained always need for the exhortation to earnest self-examination. When the apostle addresses this exhortation to the Corinthians in II Cor. 13:5 ("Try your own selves, whether ye are in the faith; prove your own selves"), he assumes that his readers shall after such self-examination discover that they are in the faith; but he nevertheless leaves open the possibility that they may discover the opposite.

* * *

On the basis of the preceding discussion, Bavinck goes on to elaborate on two extremes which are to be avoided in preaching. The one extreme is what Bavinck calls "Methodistic preaching," but which we might better characterize as "revivalistic" preaching. In this method, preaching becomes exclusively a call to faith and repentance. This type of preaching attaches no value to the privilege of having been born into, and therefore being included in, the covenant of grace. Nor does it concern itself with the believer's need for growing in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Onesided though this preaching method may be, Bavinck continues, it has its good features. In times o apostasy there must be preachers o this sort who will awaken the peopl of God from their slumbers, and wh will make plain that no mere externa baptism and confession, but only sav ing faith and true conversion give en trance into the kingdom of heaven But, while recognizing the good which can be done by such preaching we must not close our eyes to its in adequacies. This revivalistic type o proclamation wipes out the distinctio which will always exist between thos within and those without the covenan of grace; it does not understand th difference between mission preachin and congregational preaching. It lay the foundation, but does not build o that foundation; and therefore in volves itself in the danger that the en tire foundation may soon be washe away by the storms of unbelief an superstition.

The other extreme Bavinck call "ethical" preaching; we might call i for want of a better word, "didactic preaching. The proponents of thi method of preaching reason that th church or congregation addressed con sists solely of believers. The preache must keep this in mind as he address them. His preaching, therefore, mu not be mission preaching but congrega tional preaching, expressing in word what already in whole or in part live unconsciously in the hearts of his hea ers. This type of preaching serve solely to strengthen the religious con sciousness of believers; its goal is no conversion but simply edification.

This method, so Bavinck goes o also contains elements of truth whi Scripture itself compels us to recog nize. For there is a distinction betwee mission preaching and congregation preaching, and that distinction mu never be lost sight of. It is never lo sight of in Scripture. For no matt how deeply the church, in Old or Ne Testament, may have fallen away fro God, the preaching of prophets an apostles always proceeds from th thought that its members are the peo ple of God. They never wipe out th boundary between Israel and the Gen tiles, between the church and the worl Always they attach their message t that which God has given His peop in distinction from the heathen. Prop etic and apostolic preaching does n aim or at least aim solely at calli men to conversion, but also at buildi on the foundation which has been la

ıd at causing the people of God to row in the grace and knowledge of esus Christ.

This does not, however, take away ıe fact that serious strictures can be rought against this second method of reaching. Proceeding from the ideal, fails to appreciate reality and ig- ores the lesson of history. Consequent- it gradually begins to confuse faith ı the confession with confession of ıith, and to foster a state of dead rthodoxy which contents itself with ı intellectual consent to doctrine, and little concerned about the disposition f the heart and the purity of the life. s Israel rested on its descent from braham and on the temple which as in their midst, so many members f the church of the New Testament egan to build their hopes for eternity n the external ecclesiastical privileges herein they shared (baptism, con- ssion, Lord's Supper), and thus fell ıto a false complacency.

* * *

By way of application Bavinck oes on to say that, since the "revival- tic" and the 'didactic" method of reaching both suffer from onesided- ess the proper administration of the Word will always unite both elements hich in Scripture constantly go to- ether: preaching on the basis of the ovenant, and insistence on faith and onversion. Difficult as it is to main- ain these two in proper balance, as very preacher of the Word will testify, cripture does not wish us to resolve ıese difficulties but to maintain both ides, both in theory and in practice. 'ruth only comes into its own when we ccept the entire Scripture and allow to determine our personal and ec- lesiastical life. It is with these two s it is with the confession of God's nchangeable decree and man's free- om and responsibility. Whoever ishes to maintain one of these truths t the expense of the other does not re- ain either one but loses them both. o in the life of the church we must old fast to both truths: that the hurch is a gathering of true believers n Christ, and that yet there must con- tantly go forth in her midst the sum- nons to faith and repentance.

On the one hand, we must proceed n the basis of the covenant and cling o it as long as possible, not only as he Lord has established that covenant n our own churches, but also as under he leading of His providence He con- tinues to keep it in existence in the midst of mankind from generation to generation. Appeal to the covenant should be a powerful motive in preaching and in personal conversation. Having been born into a Christian church, having been baptized into the name of the Triune God, having been brought up in a Christian family — these are all, if properly understood, 'points of contact" (*aanknoopingspunten*) for the preaching of the Gospel. They make demands on man; they keep his conscience open for the administration of the Word; they give the minister of the gospel a right to claim him for the service of the Lord. Christians, no matter how far they have strayed away, are never the same as the pagans.

On the other hand, in preaching addressed to the church the earnest summons to faith and conversion may never be lacking. Proceeding from the covenant does not excuse the preacher from such a summons but, on the contrary, obligates him thereto. This obligation is rooted in the covenant of grace as it has historically, under God's guidance, extended itself into mankind, including within itself all believers and their children. For no matter how great are the blessings which God gives us in that covenant — that we have been included in the covenant of grace from birth, that we have been born into a Christian church and of Christian parents, that we have been baptized and brought up in a Christian family — all these blessings are still not enough. Ultimately everything depends on personal, saving faith; only he that believes in the Son has everlasting life. Even within the church, therefore, everyone must examine himself and prove himself, to see whether he be in the faith.

So then, Bavinck summarizes, both elements must go together in congregational preaching: linking up with the work of God which has preceded, with the blessings which He has bestowed in His covenant, Word, and baptism, and building on the foundation laid by God Himself; but on the other hand, also continual admonition to self-examination, lest one deceive himself for eternity, and an earnest summons to faith and repentance, both at the beginning and during the progression of the life of the hearer — for only he that believes shall be saved.

* * *

So far the digest of Bavinck. I believe his words are as applicable today as when originally written. There must, of course, be a difference in the way a minister preaches to an established congregation and the way a missionary preaches to a group of inquirers. But the missionary may not stop short at calling his hearers to faith and repentance; after they have been converted he must certainly strive to build them up in the faith. And the minister in an established congregation certainly fails to preach Scripturally if he simply assumes that all his hearers are saved and never calls them to repentance. One of the things Bavinck continually insists upon is that preaching within the circle of the covenant of grace must always contain a summons to faith and repentance. Full-orbed covenantal preaching must always sound the evangelical note! Failure to do so betrays a failure to grasp the full implications of the Scriptural doctrine of the covenant of grace.

"Our position cannot be a merely defensive position. We cannot neglect our world and give the impression that we are not interested in the problems of our time. Calvinism and the Reformed faith cannot be afraid that science in its development after some years or centuries may produce a result or make a discovery which would make the Christian faith impossible. Sometimes Christians have had this attitude. More and more the bulwarks were given up in the hope that there would still be one or two bulwarks which could be maintained; for example, the bulwark of inward life, or religious feeling and experience. This was but defensive and negative apologetics."

—G. C. BERKOUWER in
Modern Uncertainty and Christian Faith

Zeitgeist and Religion

by DIRK JELLEMA

IN OUR previous two articles we outlined the emergence of a new Zeitgeist or world-outlook in America, similar in many respects to what emerged somewhat earlier in Europe, and which is in contrast to the Liberal — individualistic — secular — rational outlook which dominated Western Society from, say, 1650 to 1950. In Europe, this Liberal outlook was replaced by Socialism and Communism, by irrationalism and mass movements: the main reason these have not triumphed completely in Europe is due to the "Christian Renaissance" — including not only literary figures described so well last month by Dr. Zylstra, but also to the rise of Christian Democratic parties in politcs. Such parties must fight not only the dying Liberalism of Europe, but also the rising mass-movements such as Communism. Such a "Christian Renaissance" in America would have to fight not only the dying Liberal tradition in America (individualism, secularism, free enterprise, etc.) but also the rising new Zeitgeist which we have been describing.

C. S. Lewis this past month made somewhat the same point we were making (reported in *Time*, 5-2-55: 94): Western Society is entering a new historical phase, marked by not only secularism but also by mass movements and irrationalism, which may well be even more dangerous to real Christianity than the previous epoch's Zeitgeist. The loss of our classical heritage, says Lewis, means that we have moved not only away from Christianity (as was done around 1650) as basic, but also away from humanism, which was to some extent a watered-down version of Christianity. "Christians and Pagans had much more in common with each other than either has with a post-Christian," says Lewis (perhaps over-stressing his point). What characterizes this new age? "*A new archetypal image. It is the image of old machines being superseded by new and better ones*" — not the symbol of Christ on the Cross, and not the symbol of the Rational Man searching for individual self-development.

We said that this new emergent Zeitgeist is based on a new ideology, a new world-view, a new view of human nature, the universe, and God. It says that the nature of man is that of technologist, tool-user, machine-maker; that therefore the aim of society is to increase the standard of living and provide emotional security; and that therefore "good" and "true" and "religion" are defined according to whether they help further these aims. This new Zeitgeist, we said, is emergent rather than dominant in this country: but several studies show that about one out of three would accept its basic axioms.

In this article we want to say a few words about the new Zeitgeist and education, and then conclude with some remarks about the new world-outlook and religion.

* * *

THE implications of the new ideology for education are obvious. The purpose of education becomes: (1) to train the child how to make money; (2) to teach the child how to adjust to the group and thus gain emotional security.

Teach the child to *think?* Nonsense: that does not help him make money, nor does it give him emotional security.

Therefore, down with Latin, down with history, down with logic, down with thought: let's have group studies, integrated courses, practical courses, and integrated and practical children. Let us have goals, adjustments, how to be sincere, how to influence people, how to make money, how to work with the group, how to adjust — not how to think. Thought, in this new Zeitgeist, is neither "true" nor "good."

The goal of education becomes money and emotional security, and the jargon used by the new educationists reflects this. Students do not think: they set themselves goals and achieve them. Students do not think: they adjust and work as members of a team. Students do not think: they adjust and integrate themselves. Students do not think: they carry out group projects. Students do not think: they learn to be out-going, popular, and sincere.

What would become of our Christian schools if *our people* were influenced by the new Zeitgeist? Simple.

The purpose of Christian education would become: (1) train the child how to make money; (2) teach the child to adjust to his group, which is among other things a Christian group; (3) give him a version of Christianity which will ensure emotional security.

The third point would mean, for example, dropping church history in favor of emotional hymn-singing; dropping doctrine in favor of emotional text-reading; it would mean not training the child to be a watchful and sometimes critical citizen in the Kingdom, but training him to adjust, conform, and not to cause trouble; not training him in a Christianity which would give a real critique of American society, but a "Christianity" assuring him that God approves of Americans.

The product would be not the dedicated individual wrestling with his soul before the eyes of the Eternal Judge, but the emotionally secure group happily conscious of a loving Father Image; Christians (?) who did not dedicate themselves to Christ the Tiger, the awesome Word Incarnate, Lord Omnipotent, but who superficially worshipped Christ the Infinite Liberace, everybody's Big Brother, who gives us that secure feeling.

It is my own conviction, which some may dispute, that this new Zeitgeist *has* influenced our schools.

* * *

WHAT about the role of religion in the new Zeitgeist? That too is clear enough, once the basic axioms of the new outlook are granted. The role of religion is (1) to give emotional security; (2) to help get a higher standard of living, "make more money." As Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, famous radio evangelist, says, "a simple but sincere belief in the power of God and the efficacy of prayer can improve an individual's earthly lot." (*New York Times*, 2-8-55:25).[1]

Religious belief *therefore* becomes wholly subjective, since its truth is determined by the effect it has on the individual. It thus does not make much difference *what* you believe, so long as you *believe*. Religion is not objective: it is not real in the sense that machines are real. As one of my students aptly

1. Since this article was written, a very similar evaluation (though from a different background and author) has appeared in the Progressive (April-May, 1955:) James Reichley, "A Generation on Ice."

put it, "Of course, I *believe* in Christianity: but it isn't *real*." If your group believes in Modernism, and this gives you emotional security, then it is (*by definition*) "true." If your group believes in Fundamentalism, and that gives you emotional security, then it is "true." Everyone is "entitled to his own beliefs" since *all beliefs can be equally true* for different individuals: since the test of truth is whether it gives emotional security. Hence to argue about whether Catholicism or Calvinism is more true, in the sense of describing objective reality, is impossible for the new Zeitgeist, and such a question is meaningless to any student committed to the new Zeitgeist. Catholicism is true *if you believe in it*, since it then gives you emotional security, and that is the test of truth. Calvinism is true *if you believe in it*. But either is "true" *only* in this subjective sense: neither is "real" in the sense that mathematics or science is real.

One exception to all this is atheism. Since atheism denies the validity of "believing," it therefore takes away emotional security; and thus is obviously "false," and indeed anathema. Communism is not quite so bad: Communism is "false" for *us*, because it destroys our emotional security and goes counter to our group-opinions: but for the Russians, Communism is true," *because* they believe in it.

Hence religion for the new Zeitgeist does not mean "believe in Christ," but "believe, in anything." It does not mean "the sure knowledge of reality," but "subjective truth." Ed Murrow's radio and TV series "This I believe" furnishes good examples of this: one week a Christian proclaims his belief in Christ, the next week an umpire his belief in baseball; and the implication is that both are equally *true*: as indeed they *are*, given the presuppositions of the new Zeitgeist.

The new Zeitgeist has its preferences in religion, of course. The more emotional security it gives, the better it is and the more "true" it is. A typical student holding to the new outlook would define his religion something like this: there is a God, who controls all things, and rewards those who "believe" in him with a high standard of living, and acts as a friend when you get in trouble. Maybe he will give us eternal life. If you want to believe that Jesus is God, that's okay too: it helps some people. Everyone should worship God by going to some church — whichever church people in your group approve of — at least once a month. God rewards all those who do this and who also act as God wants them to. God requires us to act respectably and conform to the group. God likes Americans especially well, because we are all respectable: this liking is *proved* by our high standard of living. Religious services should be above all "sincere" and out-going; and many people find that emotional hymn-singing helps them too. Religion is part of Our Way of Life, and we should believe in Something or we are not good Americans. If we Believe, then it is True. If we believe that Jesus is God, then that is True, though if we believe he was a man, that is True also.[1]

* * *

Many things could be brought forward to show something of this new trend: the Fundamentalist Hollywood actress, Jane Russell, and her remark that God is "an ever-lovin' doll"; the popularity of saccharine hymns on the juke-boxes (Have You Talked to the Man Upstairs? The Chapel in the Moonlight, *etc. ad naus.*); the new "piety" in Washington, with its blasphemous implication that God exists mostly to help America if atom bombs prove ineffective, and its fear of being specific about religion (we Americans Believe in God, each in his Own Way); the appeals of the Fundamentalist evangelists ("Do you feel unwanted? There is One who cares . . ."); and much more. Perhaps a few items from the last few months of *Time* magazine will indicate that there is this trend.

Last year the *New Yorker* printed a ha-ha cartoon showing a clergyman extolling the virtues of Brite Soapchips during the commercial in his sponsored sermon. Last month (*Time*, 4-18-55: 83) the noted radio evangelist, Dr. Norman Vincent Peale, announced that his radio program of spiritual advice and comfort for the insecure would be sponsored by Doeskin Tissues. Sample commercial: "Doeskin Dinner napkins . . . 100% genuine facial tissues, two big fluffy layers . . ." Said Peale: "radio is a wonderful way to broaden one's ministry."

(*Time*, 3-14-55: 52): The dean of Yale Divinity School, Liston Pope, delivered a speech including a sharp attack on the "prostitution of the Faith" shown in radio and TV religious programs. Regarding the popular religious skits of family life, Pope said: "I would never have believed that anything could be stickier than some of the soap operas, but religion has outdone even Lever Brothers. The difficult art of Christian family life is reduced to little moralisms and pleasantries, and to the cheerful conclusion that it pays in the end." Regarding "Christian" programs which offer solutions to personal or social problems in popular style, Pope said: "this kind of thing represents a prostitution of the Christian faith and a crucifixion anew of the Christ." Regarding the presentation of Christianity as guaranteeing peace of mind, he remarked that "the mambo is popular and innumerable people have been helped by patent medicines," but that does not prove that they are Christian.

(*Time*, 5-2-55: 60): John Cogley of the Ford Foundation attacked the increasing popularity of fake religiosity in Washington. "Religiosity — or the God-bit, as it is called in the more cynical capital circles — has long been a part of our political tradition . . . but the new God-bit is more serious. It is the identification of our national cause, our needs, our ends — conceived in political and military terms — with God's cause, His needs and His ends . . . if a great nation begins to think of itself as godly because it is great, it has gone a long way toward losing its claim on godliness."

(*Time*, 11-1-54): Dr. Norman Vincent Peale's book on *The Power of Positive Thinking* sold nearly a million copies. Excerpts: "Ten times a day repeat these dynamic words: 'If God be for us, who can be against us?' . . . Every morning before arising, lie relaxed in bed and deliberately drop happy thoughts into your conscious mind . . . should a negative thought of defeat come into your mind, expel it by increasing the positive affirmation. Affirm aloud: 'God is now giving me success' . . ."

(*Time*, 4-25-55: 55): Fundamentalist Jim Vaus, converted by Billy Graham, "travels from pulpit to pulpit in a panel truck with $18,000 worth of electronic equipment. He sets it up in

1. The Christian teacher running up against this new Zeitgeist often wishes for the good old days when students were atheists and agnostics. The new Zeitgeist is difficult to attack effectively. If any *Journal* readers can think of an effective and simple way to counter this new type of religion (especially an irrationalistic Deism), I'd be happy to hear it.

Zeitgeist and Religion — Continued

churches, and rivets audiences with his electronic demonstration — stereophonic sound effects, high-voltage cracklings . . ."

(*Time*, 5-22-55: 98): Review of *Strategic Air Command*, which offers a good illustration of C. S. Lewis' point cited above: "In the end, the picture passes from the understandingly lyrical to the outright reverent. When the camera glides in for its first look at a B-47, the sound track bursts into organ peals of religious music, a strangely sacred serenade . . ."

(*Time*, 5-22-55: 99): Review of Hollywood's production of Graham Greene's excellent religious novel, *The End of the Affair*, which is watered down in the film to fit the new Zeitgeist: "Sanctimonious soap opera . . . interprets God with familiarity which . . . verges on contempt . . . the struggle between God and Van Johnson for the lady's heart and soul . . . attempts to drag the Deity through the theater like a dancing bear."

(*Time*, 11-8-54) Review of a Catholic attack on watered-down religion; (some of the citations will remind readers of what some people in "our circles" buy): Among the items cited by *Time*: "Luminous Sacred Hearts that glow in the dark. 'So comforting for the sick,' says the manufacturer's circular. 'Hot traffic builder — always in demand. . . . Christmas cards (many showing Jesus with tumbling curls and simpering smile) which are peddled to the trade in three categories: religious, deeply religious, and profoundly religious."

(*Time*, 10-18-54): Story on Faith Healer Harry Edwards, an Englishman: "Six thousand people jammed London's Albert Hall. There were children on crutches, and men and women with twisted limbs . . . to an organ accompaniment they sang the hymn "Oh Worship the King." Then Harry Edwards went to work on them. Cheer seemed to radiate like a nimbus from his well-pomaded white head. One by one, members of the unhappy audience limped, stumbled or were carried up to him on the stage . . . He grants audience to the ailing on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays . . . They wait for their appointments amid sweet-smelling flowers . . . in a large paneled room with a white crucifix on the table. Each morning an average of 2500 letters arrive . . . 'we get in touch with the spirit people,' said Edwards. 'They receive information that we can give them, and they direct the healing.' "

Are you unhappy, maladjusted, unintegrated, not in conformity with the group? Then, says the new Zeitgeist, you must Believe. Believe in anything but believe.

* * *

IN conclusion, it might be repeated that the new Zeitgeist is not yet dominant: it affects, say, one out of three. But it is the trend, and, unless halted (and what will halt it?) will become dominant in another generation. And after all, dear reader, why would it be so bad? We would continue to have a high standard of living, wouldn't we? And we could Believe in Something, couldn't we? And would have emotional security, wouldn't we? Why worry? Why should we care . . . ?

At Least Four Times a Year

by JAMES DAANE

THE Church Order governing the Christian Reformed Churches contains a rule about the frequency of Holy Communion. Article 63 states: "The Lord's Supper shall be administered at least every two or three months." Thus every congregation is obliged to celebrate this sacrament at least six, and at the *very least* four times a year.

Classical church-visitors are obliged by the "Rules for Church Visiting" to enquire whether the congregation observes Holy Communion as required by the Church Order. But the prescribed question is: "Is the Lord's Supper celebrated at least four times a year"? Thus the "Rules for Church Visiting" require the *very least* demanded by the Church Order. It is not the at least six times, but the "at least four times" which is insisted upon.

I am not suggesting that the church-visitors ought to insist on the strictest application of the furthest reach of the Church Order. This would hardly comport with the freedom of the local congregation. But I think that it is a matter of surprise — or should be — that all the 466 Christian Reformed Churches keep the rule in its *minimum* form (a fact that suggests that the freedom of the local church lies unused).

With the exception of a few churches which celebrate the Lord's Supper on Good Friday, all the churches, it seems, follow the identical pattern of Lord's Supper celebration: once every three months. All meet the same minimum requirement. Conformity is uniform.

* * *

HOW can we account for such uniformity? If we think in terms of the freedom and vitality of the local congregation, such uniformity is not a wholly natural thing. Surely it is strange that most — if indeed not every — church follows precisely the same pattern of frequency. This becomes the more strange when we remember that there are at least three legitimate possibilities: at least six times a year, at least four times a year and more than six times a year. When most if not every one of the 466 churches hold to the same frequency patterns, it is difficult to the point of impossibility — if one reflects on the matter — to avoid the impression that our practice and thinking about the Lord's Supper has fallen into traditionalism. And if indeed there is no reflection on this matter, this in itself is proof that we have fallen into an unthinking traditionalism. When so many churches follow the identical pattern of "four times a year," there is more reason to believe that this is due to an unthinking and faceless uniformity than to a healthy conformity.

But what is even more strange than the uniformity is the fact that so many churches have their *need* of this sacrament satisfied with the least number of Communion celebrations permissible. Every church seems to feel that the need for this spiritual food and drink

which feeds our souls unto life eternal is adequately met by the minimum demand of "once every three months."

Observance less than four times a year would be a breaking of the letter of the law. Every church keeps the letter of the law — which is hardly a keeping of the spirit of a law which states "at least four times a year." Yet the minimum fulfillment of the letter of the law seems to fulfill the spiritual sacramental needs of every church! This aspect of the uniformity is most strange of all.

This notion of the minimal church-need for the Lord's Supper spills over into the minds of the members of the churches. How often members of our churches visiting other of our churches decline the opportunity to fellowship at the Lord's Table. Why this refusal to fellowship with the Lord and his people at the Communion Table? Why? Because three or four weeks ago they "had" it! They are so conditioned by the thought that once every three months is enough that they refuse. What is so very strange is that their reason for refusal is not considered strange!

Such uniformity among our churches, and such uniformity to the minimal demand, suggests strongly that our response to the sacrament of Holy Communion is much more a traditionalistic than a vital religious response of the heart. We seem to go to the Lord's Table not so much because our souls are hungry and thirsty, but because it is that time of the year again. To put it more strongly, we seem no longer to have a vital belief in the power and efficacy of the sacrament of our Lord's death.

* * *

When classical church-visitors ask the prescribed question, Is the Lord's Supper celebrated at least four times a year? the answer is always a confident Yes conveyed with the comfortable air that at this point at least the congregation is in the right. Here at least is no occasion for rebuke or admonition! But the confidence drains into a pallid confusion if the answer is immediately followed by the question: Why only four times a year?

I have on occasion asked this latter question, and it is somewhat amusing to see the collective consistorial countenance light up with surprise — while the person obliged to answer squirms in his chair reaching for an answer to what he regards as an awkward question.

The immediate and unreflective answer is almost uniformly the same: "It's custom. All our churches have it only four times a year, don't they. It's traditional with us."

And a bit later after hasty reflection — to find either a better answer or one that simply defends the traditionally sanctioned number "4" — there comes with predictable regularity this answer: "If we had it more than four times a year the sacrament would become commonplace and lose its effectiveness."

Even if the "no more than four times a year" were a commendable frequency pattern — which I do not think it is — this argument commonly used for its justification is nevertheless unacceptable. To urge that greater frequency would reduce the sacrament to something ordinary and ineffective is to deny the nature and power of the sacrament.

If the sacrament of our Lord's death is a means of grace — and we all say that it is — then greater frequency of celebration will not reduce its power. Else grace is no more grace! If this sacrament is a means of grace, then this sacrament does not wear out with use. Its power does not wear thin. Thanks be to God — for our very salvation depends on this — grace is eternally durative. It can never lose its power so long as it is God's grace.

If the power and efficacy of the sacrament of our Lord's death depends solely or largely, or even in some small part, on the degree of novelty and newness with which the sacrament strikes me as I come to the Lord's Supper, then it is not a means of grace. A proper celebration of this sacrament requires the presence of faith, but not the presence of a sense of novelty. To be powerfully effective this means of grace does not require as a precondition that the participant experience the feeling that here he is confronted with something quite unordinary, something unique and strange, something that happens only four times a year! It is not the subjective sense of novelty induced by infrequent celebration that gives the sacrament its power to save and satisfy the hunger of our souls. The sacrament has power in its own right, the power of God's grace which is able not only to overcome any subjective sinful feeling that the sacrament is a commonplace thing, but to nourish and sustain and save our souls unto life eternal.

The gospel is also a means of grace. And it is good news. It is always news because it remains ever new. Though preached in season and out of season for almost 2000 years, it is still new. Preaching the gospel and listening to the gospel has not worn out its power. No amount of usage renders it anything less than the power of God unto salvation.

If we believe that the gospel must be preached every Sunday in our churches, and twice, whatever has led us to believe that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper will wear out and lose its power if we use it more than four times a year?

Anyone who believes that the Lord's Supper should be celebrated only four times a year lest it lose its power has nothing to say to the young man who rolls over on Sunday morning to go back to sleep. What answer could then be given to the young man who says he goes to church only once every few months because he does not want hearing the Word of God to become a commonplace and ineffective experience? The argument is as cogent for infrequent church attendance, as for infrequent celebration of the Lord's Supper. And what could be said to the visitor who attended church but did not listen to the sermon because he heard a sermon a month ago?

The substance of the matter is this: if we really do believe in the argument of infrequency to protect the efficacy of the Lord's Supper — the argument so often used to protect the tradition of "only once every three months" — then we do not in fact believe that the sacrament of our Lord's death is a means of grace. We may then say the opposite, but saying so is not enough. If our little moods about "commonplace" and "ordinary" render the eating of the bread and the drinking of the cup impotent and ineffective, then either the sacrament is not a means of grace, or grace is no more grace. Its sovereignty has been abrogated by our psychological states of mind. Such a conception of the grace of the sacrament is nothing less than a sacramental arminianism. It is well for us to remember that arminianism can invade the doctrine of the sacraments as easily as it can other doctrine. Armin-

At Least Four Times a Year — Continued

ianism is a faulty view of grace, and just because the sacraments are means of grace, it can also distort our view of the sacraments.

The same invasion of grace by arminianism has taken place where no essential difference is recognized between the Word and Sacraments as means of grace, and prayer, hymn-singing, etc. as means of grace. Where the latter are equated or almost equated with the Word and Sacraments, arminianism has been allowed to enter quietly through the back door.

* * *

How often do we celebrate Communion in our churches? Most of us would answer "Four times, once every three months." Strictly speaking, this is not true. We actually celebrate it eight times, twice every three months. Stated more exactly, our churches celebrate the Lord's Supper eight times per year, but our membership participates only four times per year. Four times they are just spectators watching the administration of the sacrament.

Four times a year 90 or 95 percent of the membership of our churches sit back and in the second "Sunday evening" communion service and just watch five or ten percent as they have communion together and with their Lord. This too is strange and would seem strange were it not hedged with the sanction of tradition. That some saints do not have Communion with other saints — even though they are sitting together in the same building! — is not only strange *but out of harmony with the very idea of Communion*. That it does not seem strange and incongruous to us is the strangest thing of all.

We are at present trying to meet this arrangement by providing a Short Communion Form for this second celebration every three months. Why do we really need this Shorter Form? Because we do not want to take the time for a full, regular administration of the sacrament, *since most of the congregation is not celebrating the sacrament anyway*.

A Shorter Form will take less time. There is some point to taking less time. Why should we take a long time for something that the great majority of the congregation has no part in? There are limits to how long we can expect them to just watch and wait. So there is some point in the demand for a Shorter Form. *But the only point in its favor is that it saves time.* Assuming that our present Form for Communion is a good one, this is hardly a good reason for changing it.

And even if we do adopt a shorter time-saving form, we still have the anomalous situation where the *unity* of communion is broken by having one group of Christians merely watching another group of Christians partake of the Lord's Supper.

It would indeed be far better to have more frequent celebrations of Communion (the Sunday-morning kind) and eliminate the second Sunday-evening kind.

By such a change we would gain much and lose nothing — except that strange and anomalous second Sunday evening Communion service for which a shorter time-saving Communion Form is thought necessary.

Confronting Today's Crisis

by ELCO H. OOSTENDORP*

De Gereformeerde Theoloog en De Sociologie is the title of the thesis written by Rev. Remke Kooistra in obtaining his degree as Doctor of Theology from the Free University at Amsterdam, on the 4th of March, 1955. Since that date he has arrived in Canada and is now the minister of the Christian Reformed Church at Red Deer. He bade farewell to a large congregation in the Hague to join our denomination in its work in Canada. We are happy to welcome this zealous and talented leader into our fellowship, and wish him a long and blessed ministry in his new adopted country and denomination. But the purpose of this brief notice is to introduce his book rather than the man. I am sure we shall be hearing more from him and about him in future.

*The Rev. Mr. Oostendorp, who recently completed a five-year ministry in Canada, is minister of the Parkersburg Iowa Christian Reformed Church.

The Reformed Theologian and Sociology, as the above title may be translated is a broad subject. The content of the book is not as broad as its title. Kooistra is especially interested in our modern situation in which the Church confronts a radical cultural crisis. The importance of the new science of Sociology is that it undertakes the study of society, and therefore furnishes us with an analysis and description of the social structure. The very rise of such sciences as psychology, economics, sociology, etc., indicates the growing complexity of modern culture. In them men are attempting to apply the techniques of science to the problems of social life. It is the contention of this author that the theologian — by whom he means not the abstract scholar, but the active minister too — must take cognizance of this science and bring the Christian message to bear upon the situation which it helps him to understand.

The developments of modern technology are effecting a revolution of modern life even greater than that of the industrial revolution of a century ago. It is accomplished by a far-reaching revolution in ideologies. Using especially the works of Mannheim and Sorokin, Kooistra sketches this revolution. He points out that there is a growing secularization of life. But this term can also be used in a favorable sense, namely, differentiation of life into its various spheres rather than the domination of all of life by the Church (or religion) in the sense of primitive and Medieval society. But differentiation leads to disintegration when the various elements that should constitute society begin to fall apart. The tragic end of the process is designated "radical secularization," what we are in the habit of calling "secularism." This trend is not limited to modern life, but can be traced even in the history of Israel, as the author does very instructively. The

problem today for the Reformed theologian, as the leader of the Reformed churches, is: How can we adjust ourselves to the inevitable and necessary and good processes of differentiation going on today, while at the same time to influencing both the membership of the Church, and through them society as a whole, as to check the process of disintegration and prevent secularization? Even more, how can the Church positively re-Christianize society? That is the tremendous and vital question to which the author addresses himself.

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As is so often the case in books of this kind the diagnosis is better than the prescription for a positive solution. But several good general policies in such important matters as preaching, church government, and liturgy are pointed out. Naturally, the study is slanted largely toward the crisis in the Gereformeerde Kerken and The Netherlands. Most of the authors referred to are also Dutch. The European situation differs in several respects from that in America, but there is much that can also be valuable and stimulating for us here. Again and again the question will arise, What are we doing about these problems, or are we smugly complacent in the illusion that we have the answer and all is well? Do we have a "plan" with which to confront the present day cultural and religious crisis?

As members of the Christian Reformed Church we will be interested in the fact that one of the theses defended by Dr. Kooistra was that the parish system of church organization in use in our churches is to be preferred to that followed in the Netherlands. The extremely large and unwieldy city churches constitute a real problem there with the growth of the cities and removal of the old landmarks. Another "American" custom to which he gives favorable attention is the greater emphasis on social life in the congregation as having a wholesome integrating influence and making the communion of saints more vital. Such points lead us to take grateful note of the good things we have, and challenge us to develop them in the most fruitful way to the solution of the problems of our time.

Can Physics Be Christian?

by HENRY STOB

THERE are those in the Christian Church — I call them Dichotomists for reasons that will presently appear — who believe that it is absurd to speak of a "Christian Mathematics." They deny that faith and grace bear such a *special* relation to the formal and exact sciences as would warrant our calling these sciences "Christian." They think of Geometry and Chemistry in strict analogy to *things*. They regard the quantitative sciences as being no more amenable to religious qualification than a hammer or a tea-cup. The term "Christian Physics," in their view, makes as much and as little sense as the term "Christian Automobile." Both terms, they think, are meaningless.

Those who think this way I call *Dichotomists*. I call them this because they *cut* the body of Science *in two*. They separate the several sciences which constitute the single Organism of Knowledge into two disparate groups. One group embraces all the sciences which deal with *Man*, the other all the sciences which deal with *Things* or *Relations*. Those in the first group are known as the Human or *Spiritual* sciences, those in the other as the *Natural* or *Formal* sciences. The spiritual sciences the Dichotomist believes to be modifiable by Sin and Grace; the natural and formal sciences he believes to be impervious to these. The former are thought to sustain a special relation to Christianity, the latter are thought to sustain *no* such relation. In this view there is such a thing as a "Christian Ethics," but there is *no* such thing as a "Christian Grammar."

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THE denial of any *special* relation of Christianity to the exact or formal sciences does not, of course, involve the Dichotomist in a denial of the *general* relevance of Christian truth to the scientific enterprise.

As a Christian the Dichotomist acknowledges the relevance to all science — including the quantitative sciences — of the Christian doctrine of *Creation*. He knows that unless there were God, an intelligible world of nature, and a race of men fitted to explore it, there could be no science at all. But he observes that, were there no Creator and no creation, there would be no hammer either. He observes, indeed, that were there no Creator there would be no anti-Christian science such as philosophic Nihilism, since this too is possible only in a God-created and God-sustained universe. The mere fact, therefore, that Creation is the precondition of all things human does not entitle us to call the natural sciences "Christian." Were that the case we would have to call all things without exception "Christian."

Nor does the Dichotomist ignore the fact of *Sin*. He acknowledges that its curse lies over all, and he everywhere observes its crippling effects. He holds, however, that sin has not destroyed nature — either physical or human. It has not annihilated physical facts, it has not abrogated nature's laws, it has not robbed man of his ability either to perceive or to think. All men therefore, in spite of sin, can, within the limits of their finitude, know the facts and laws of nature, and it is precisely this knowledge which we call objective science.

Moreover, he observes, there is a *grace* of God as wide and universal as the fact of sin. This *Common Grace* is or is accompanied by, a general operation of God's Spirit which qualifies *all* men to attain to truths, not indeed about God and the Supernatural, but yet about nature and its processes; and it is precisely this knowledge that Christian and non-Christian hold in common within the framework of those sciences which we call natural or exact. It will not do therefore to call these sciences "Christian." They are Common.

The Dichotomist does not wish in all this to deny the existence of the *Special Grace* that saves, the importance of a living Personal Faith, or the significance of both for our knowledge and understanding of the deep and ultimate things of life. He acknowledges that Grace and Faith radically affect our capacity

Can Physics Be Christian — Continued

to attain a total view of the cosmos, and to know its origin and goal. Grace and Faith, he recognizes, are the very fashioners of our Philosophy. They make their influence felt too, and that significantly, in all those spiritual and humane studies which deal with norms and values. But they do not affect in this way the sciences of law and fact which are concerned with description and not with appraisal. The natural and formal sciences lie, in their abstractness, tangential to the burning personal center of the Christian faith, and remain in their inner constitution unaffected by it.

Support for this could be found in Professor Brunner's Law of the Closeness of Relation. Says he: "The nearer anything lies to that center of existence where we are concerned with the whole, that is, with man's relation to God and the being of the person, the greater is the disturbance of rational knowledge by sin; the farther away anything lies from this center, the less is the disturbance felt, and the less difference is there between knowing as a believer or as an unbeliever. The disturbance reaches its maximum in theology, and its minimum in the exact sciences, and zero in the sphere of the formal. Hence it is meaningless to speak of 'Christian Mathematics'; . . . on the other hand, it is significant and necessary to distinguish the Christian conceptions of freedom, the good, community, and still more the Christian idea of God, from all other conceptions" (Revelation and Reason, p. 383).

* * *

THE Dichotomist finds support for his view in the well-known fact that in the investigative phases of the formal and natural sciences the Christian student employs the same methods and reaches the same conclusions that the non-Christian does. It is obvious that in Philosophy the Christian and the non-Christian are in opposition; they do not hold their ultimate principles of interpretation in common. But it is equally obvious that in Mathematics, Logic, and Physics they are in the most substantial agreement. They agree in acknowledging that two times two equals four, that contradictory propositions cannot both be true, that water is composed of two parts hydrogen and one part oxygen, that one particle of matter attracts another with an accurately specifiable force — and they agree on many hundreds of such propositions besides.

How then, it is asked — how, in the absence of clearly recognizable difference — can anyone seriously speak of "Christian Logic," "Christian Chemistry," or "Christian Mathematics"? Are these sciences not just what they are: instruments with which to articulate rival world views, but in themselves no more affected by these world views than a tool is affected by its employment in the building of a Christian Church or a Heathen Temple?

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As has appeared, the Dichotomist's denial of any special relation of Christianity to the exact sciences rests not only upon his understanding of Christianity, but also upon his understanding of what science is.

The term "Science," he points out, is an abstract generic noun denoting a *Collection* — a collection of quite diverse sciences. There is not one science, there are many. And they are different. Some are descriptive, some are normative, some are formal. There are theological sciences, philosophical sciences, social sciences, natural sciences, and mathematical sciences.

Because these are different it is folly, he insists, to treat them as identical in the manner of those who speak in the singular of "Christian Science." The only effective way of treating the problem of Christianity and Science is to distinguish, separate, bifurcate, dichotomize. There is a line within the collection of sciences up to which Grace and Faith do indeed extend, but beyond which they cease to be constitutive. The sciences on yonder side

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"The true honor of man is the image and likeness of God, which is not preserved save in relation to Him by whom it is impressed. The less therefore he loves what is his own, the more he adheres to God. But through the desire to make trial of his own power, man at his own bidding falls down to himself as to a sort of intermediate grade. And so, as he wishes to be under no one as God is, he is thrust on from this same middle state of his, by way of punishment to that which is lowest, that is, to those things in which the beasts delight. And thus, while his honor is the likeness of God, his dishonor is the likeness of the beast . . . And so the mind is overweighted and thrust out by its own weight as it were from blessedness, and learns by its own punishment, through trial of its own intermediate state, what is the difference between the good it has abandoned and the bad to which it has committed itself; and having dissipated and destroyed its strength, it cannot return, save by the grace of its Creator calling it to repentance, and remitting its sins."

ST. AUGUSTINE (354-430 AD),
De trin. XII, xi, 16

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"What do I love when I love God? Not beauty of bodies, nor the fair harmony of time, nor the brightness of the light so gladsome to our eyes, nor sweet melodies of varied songs, nor the fragrant smell of flowers and ointments and spices, not manna and honey, not limbs acceptable to embracements of flesh. None of these I love when I love God. And yet I love a kind of light and melody, and fragrance, and meat, and embracement, when I love my God — the light, melody, fragrance, meat, embracement of my inner man: where there shineth unto my soul what space cannot contain, and there soundeth what time beareth not away, and there smelleth what breathing disperseth not, and there tasteth what eating diminisheth not, and there clingeth what satiety divorceth not. This is it which I love when I love my God."

—ST. AUGUSTINE (354-430 AD),
Confessions, X, vi, 8.

:an and should be affected by Christian faith, and they are fitted to articulate that faith. The sciences on this side, being differently situated, cannot do so.

Why not then recognize the fact, he says, and be Christian scientists where we can — in the theological, philosophical, and social sciences. And where we can not — in the formal and natural sciences — let us, as Christian men, be content simply to be good scientists according to the strict and accepted standards of the occidental scientific tradition.

* * *

I have called this view Dichotomism. Because the designation is ill-sounding and apparently prejudicial I feel obliged to say that, in my judgment, the Dichotomist has called attention to very significant aspects of the problem we are considering. I think him to be in error however precisely at the point which suggested to me the term of disapprobation I have employed. He draws too sharply, too absolutistically, the line that separates the descriptive from the normative sciences and from philosophy. The sciences are many no doubt, and each is unique, but they are not windowless; they are not insulated against each other, nor divorced from faith, in the simplistic way they are here represented to be. Knowledge is various no doubt, and there are certainly different levels of truth, but knowledge and truth is also in a real sense One. And this the Dichotomist does not sufficiently take into account.

It is the oneness of Science and the unity of scientific truth which is emphasized in the view — called Rationalism — that I hope to consider in next month's *Journal.*

LETTERS TO THE JOURNAL

How to Be Heard: A Proposal

Dear Editors:

I want to express my appreciation for your magazine. I have enjoyed reading it very much. It has proven to be very useful and fruitful for me. I do not mean to imply I completely share everything which has been written. Occasionally it happens that articles have merely fortified my thinking in another direction. Then again I have been given new direction to thought. I am very grateful for your work.

The purpose of this letter, however, is to reflect upon an article by Dr. Henry Zylstra. The article to which I am referring is found in the January issue entitled, "Of Writing Many Books." I quite share Dr. Zylstra's proposition that more noteworthy books would appear, if our writers had the time to write them. Yet I believe there is another side to the story. It is the harsh fact of geography and politics. Dr. Zylstra's article appeared just at the time when I was participating in a series of conferences with other churchmen in Cleveland. Those in attendance were liberals as well as evangelicals, although the former dominated our sessions.

I had an interesting experience at these sessions. I was new, denominationally speaking. As a Cleveland churchman I found I had an audience. My views on theology were thoughtfully noted. Finally I had to be identified with my church. As soon as I was removed from essential identification with the West Side Christian Reformed Church, an unknown quantity in Cleveland, and identified with a denominational name which is equated with western Michigan, I ceased to have a fully open-minded audience. I had become "pigeon-holed."

This experience caused me to wonder just how influential our theological works and Calvinistic literature would be. Through inquiry I discovered that Dr. Zylstra's longed-for major contribution to Reformed thought and interpretation would not even be read here. They would know what it contained by observing a Dutch author from a Dutch western Michigan community published by a Dutch name also located in Dutch western Michigan. I am not implying that Eerdmans and others do not have sales here. Rather the influential people who see publications as I have described apparently do not read them to find out what they say. This cruel fact alarms me! One man thought I must not be a true representative of my denomination. So he judged upon the basis of our conversation. And yet what I said could be applauded, I trust, by the Reformed community. The point is that a bit of geography on the eastern shores of Lake Michigan with a large Reformed population has a special tag, and all literature and thought emanating from there is pigeon-holed. And as I thought on Dr. Zylstra's article, I began to feel that there is another reason why we are not regarded as an influence in our own field of Calvinism: the fact of geography and politics. It became so abundantly clear, as I tried to understand this phenomenon via conversation and interrogation, that we have erected for ourselves in western Michigan an impregnable fortress or citadel. In the olden days of warfare such forts were assaulted and attacked. Today such isolated forts are no longer considered military objectives. Modern military forces outflank and surround them and hence neutralize them without engaging the fortress. They have no strategic value, so why waste energy in assaulting them?

I have also discovered that should the *Grand Rapids Press* trumpet one of its Grand Rapids sons who really has something to say in the field of Reformed thought, the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* will permit such trumpeting to go by unnoticed. But I have noticed that if a Clevelander (who is not a member of and lives in one of our minority population areas) is trumpeted by the *Plain Dealer*, his fame extends beyond the city limits. Again the point is that a Dutch name from the Dutch citadel just doesn't have a fair chance to be noted.

All this causes me to think about our denomination. Our faith will never be popularized and will never take hold, if we concentrate in one geographical spot. I believe history has demonstrated that dispersion is the strength of the body of Christ. It was so in the early church. Early persecutions were the means for spreading the gospel. The Christian Reformed Church will never be a factor in Reformed thinking as far as national influence is concerned as long as we gravitate to the citadel (which really is a most desirable place to live — I don't blame people for wanting to gravitate there). Do we realize how much we have gravitated to one spot? Statistically speaking there is a tremendous pull toward the citadel. The state of California has

its North Dakota and Iowa clubs, but the citadel has its Sioux Center and Minnesota gatherings en mass too. Without a doubt these people moved to western Michigan for excellent reasons. But the fact that they went to the citadel rather than to other places is also indicative of the fact that they were the most virile in Reformed thinking. So the strong (the influential) among us have merely fortified the fort. And you don't win modern battles by impregnating the fort, but by infiltrating into territories to be conquered with able, keen, alert Reformed warriors.

And with this movement goes its by-product: the placement of our institutions within the fort. It is not an overstatement to say that to a large degree at least the citadel's Calvin can be credited with the demise of Grundy College (not intentional or willful to be sure). Our English weekly was promptly imported from New Jersey and placed in the fort, when the English language became popular as a mode for conveying Reformed thought. The Reformed Bible Institute was removed from its worldly surroundings (an A number 1 eclectic American workshop for missions) and settled in the less worldly citadel. There was good reason to place the headquarters of the National Union of Christian Schools in the citadel: to coordinate its activities with the college that produces Reformed teachers. But in the process Chicago again lost one of her offspring. And so today we have the nerve centers which direct all our thinking to influence the outside world located in the citadel with the exception of the speaking voice of the Back to God Hour. And Cleveland churchmen listen to that voice; say it is good; yet for some strange reason do not classify it with the citadel. By that I mean, the voice isn't pre-judged.

How shall we get away from this climate so we may be heard? I read a question raised by the Reverend Jan Karel Van Baalen, which might be a possible avenue to aid us. I submit it to you for your consideration. The question was, "Is not the centennial the occasion to erect a separate seminary building together with its own library? The college would have added class room space." And I take it that there is a certain amount of climate which favors the separate establishment of the Seminary. Then I continue: would it not be wise to locate that seminary in some strategic American center? It strikes me that Calvin Theological Seminary would be a voice which would at least be heard, if it is not identified with the cast of the citadel. Dr. Waterink lecturing at a Chicago Calvin, for instance, would be noted beyond the reaches of western Michigan. The accomplishments of local men are usually noted by local news services. A Chicago, Denver, Cleveland or Minneapolis statement of new developments at Calvin will get wider publicity than a Grand Rapids statement, simply because Grand Rapids Dutch names are already categorized — you don't have to read their contributions. It comes from the citadel; consequently the trademark tells all. A Chicago Calvin would have the advantage of competing with other well-known theological schools within the same metropolitan area. It will begin to cast away the appearance of an isolated citadel. From the viewpoint of strategical and political value I am very much convinced we stand to gain much from new geography for Calvin Theological Seminary.

It would also help to decentralize. It is not good to have one citadel which keeps drawing on our church public — which tends to strengthen the strong. The early church did not develop in that manner. Nor has any modern movement become a major factor by centralizing in one geographic area. Salt can not be a savor by remaining in one lump in a distant corner of the whole it must savor. It is highly desirable that we move at least one of our major institutions (if it is seeking new property anyway) from the citadel and into America (Canada included).

I have by implication suggested Chicago as a site. I suppose we must be practical to the degree that the seminary should be able to service our denomination. Consequently the excellent location of the growing strategic center of Denver might be ruled out. And I suppose that a Milwaukee, Minneapolis, or Des Moines location might remove it a bit too far from the heavier Christian Reformed populations. Cleveland is a strategic center from a national point of view, but it is off center as well, unless the eastern seaboard would be brought into the orbit of service. But Chicago seems a more likely location. For instance, if the seminary adopted the policy of no Monday morning classes for middlers and seniors, all of Michigan except the extreme northern areas would still be within the radius of calling on students. Even Saginaw and Cadillac are within 280 miles. It would bring Iowa within the range of regular service. All in all, 30 more churches would be brought into the scope of regular service, while an additional 50 would be brought within the scope of occasional service. I understand that the Pella and Ostfriesland churches have occasionally been served by Calvin students from Grand Rapids. I think this is valuable, even though Michigan communities are not as conveniently nearby.

I know that Grand Rapids is one of the finest cities in the country in which to live. But I do believe the professors could enjoy living in some pleasant Chicago-land suburb as Palos Heights or Western Springs, were the seminary located there. In addition to their own library, seminarians and professors would have direct access to some of the finest theological libraries of the country.

It would be well for us to do one more thing. Should the opportunity arise to engage some thorough-going Reformed scholar and teacher who does not happen to have a Dutch label, it would aid us to engage him. But need I say any more about this, when Dr. Harry Boer so well pointed this out in your paper in connection with the names of our college faculty?

The centennial marks the juncture in our history when we must indeed turn outward. Except for the ripples of discussion at the close of the first century of our history, we have pretty largely turned ourselves inward. The thought of Calvin Theological Seminary stepping out of the citadel and into the eclectic American climate is loaded with potential. And what better. And what better time is there to take this step than at the moment when we begin our second century of existence under God and for Biblically illiterate Americans and our apostatizing country. Today is the day for vision.

I just wanted to pass these experiences and thoughts along to you.

Most cordially,
Howard B. Spaan
Cleveland, Ohio